

1999 Legislative Issues

Farm and Forest Lands Protection Act

This bill was introduced in 1998 and will be reintroduced in 1999. If adopted, the bill would create a program to allow counties to voluntarily create Priority Agriculture Land Areas. Within these areas, conservation easements may be established in order to preserve farm and forest lands, scenic and cultural landscapes and environmentally sensitive areas.

This bill would also:

- Provide a means by which farm and forest lands may be protected and enhanced as a viable segment of the State's economy and an important economic and environmental resource;
- Encourage landowners to make a long-term commitment to agriculture by offering them financial incentives and security of land use;
- Protect agriculture and forestry operations from incompatible non-farm land use;
- Assure permanent protection of Productive agricultural and forest lands to protect the agricultural economy of the State;
- Provide compensation to landowners for development rights; and
- Leverage state, federal, local, and private funds for the purchase of agriculture conservation easements and protect the public investment in easements.